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Senate

The Senate met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TAMMY BALDWIN, a Senator from the State of Wisconsin.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, who inhabits eternity, You have given us the gift of this day. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

May our lawmakers never forget that they borrow their heartbeats from You. Lord, continue to sustain our Senators and give them all they need to glorify Your Holy Name. May Your Spirit so move them that they will live exemplary lives. Lord, compel them to be just and honest in all their dealings. May they remember that our country is no better than our citizens and no stronger than its commitment to righteousness.

We pray in Your righteous Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 22, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the

Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TAMMY BALDWIN, a Senator from the State of Wisconsin, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. BALDWIN thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, last night, the Senate took a vote on whether to proceed to a debate on infrastructure. Unfortunately, our Republican colleagues blocked the Senate from taking this first entirely procedural step.

I understand that the effort to finish the text of the bipartisan bill has progressed since I announced this vote last week. The negotiators have made significant progress, but there are still some outstanding issues. Therefore, at the end of the vote yesterday, I changed my response to a no so that I may move to reconsider the vote at a future time.

My colleagues on both sides of the aisle should be assured, as majority leader, I have every intention of passing both major infrastructure packages, the bipartisan infrastructure framework and a budget resolution with reconciliation instructions, before we leave for the August recess. I laid out that precise schedule at the end of June, and I intend to stick with it.

A new report by the chief economist at Moody's, Mark Zandi, hardly a liberal economist, someone who actually served as an economic adviser to Senator McCain, concluded that both major infrastructure proposals are essential to maximize our economic potential—not just one, both. And, together, they would give a massive boost to the economy, ease inflation pressures, create jobs, increase productivity, and reduce income inequality.

These are incredibly worthy goals, and the Senate is going to keep working on both tracks of infrastructure in order to achieve them.

NOMINATION OF TRACY STONE-MANNING

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, now on another matter, today in the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, President Biden's nominee to lead the Bureau of Land Management, Tracy Stone-Manning, will receive a vote to advance her nomination to the Senate floor.

While it sometimes flies under the radar, the Bureau of Land Management is responsible for overseeing nearly 250 million acres of public lands and 700 million acres of mineral rights, a vast track of the United States of America. No Agency is more important to the maintenance of public lands for public use. BLM, the Bureau of Land Management, that is, will play a huge role in the fight against climate change as well.

Over the past 4 years under Donald Trump, the Agency abandoned its mission, shrunk public lands, targeted our national monuments, and opened up those beautiful landscapes for corporate industrial development. In short, the next leader of the Bureau of Land Management has a tall order in restoring and protecting America's public lands.

Ms. Stone-Manning is exceedingly qualified to take on this important job.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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After serving on Senator TESTER's and Governor Bullock's staff, she went on to lead the environmental agency in Montana, where she was respected not only by conservationists but by ranchers and fossil fuel interests as well. She developed a reputation as an honest broker, someone who is firm in their principles but always willing to try and build consensus.

Yet the members of the Republican minority on the committee are trying to turn this consensus-driven, well-respected nominee into another partisan flashpoint, dredging up a letter she forwarded while in graduate school and claiming it was evidence that she is "an echo-terrorist." The claim is just as hysterical as it sounds.

Ms. Stone-Manning has the full support of the chair of the committee, the Senator from West Virginia; Mr. TESTER, the Senator from Montana; and from me.

We need someone like Ms. Stone-Manning to manage our public lands, a staunch advocate for conservation but also an honest broker, someone who will repair the damage of the last 4 years and be a faithful steward of America's national treasures, someone who understands that conservation policy has a critical role to play in the fight against climate change. Ms. Stone-Manning has all of those qualities, and I look forward to moving her nomination to the Senate floor.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, with COVID-19 cases ticking up all across the country, with some bureaucrats and elected officials actually talking about reimposing various measures on the American people, the Biden administration continues to let illegal immigrants pour across our southern border, and reportedly, they are considering loosening our border security even more.

Remember when the Biden campaign's rhetoric and then the Biden administration's early actions led to a rush on the border. They tried to wave it off as a seasonal, springtime surge, but, of course, that wasn't true. The numbers just keep climbing.

Customs and Border Protection had more encounters on the southern bor-

der in June than they had in May, nearly 190,000 encounters last month alone—the highest number in 21 years. Law enforcement is coming across huge groups of hundreds of individuals. With almost 3 months still remaining in fiscal year 2021, CPB has already encountered more illegal immigrants than it did in the entirety—the entirety—of fiscal 2019, which was, of course, before COVID. We have exceeded that total with almost 3 months to go.

The Biden administration claims they are addressing the crisis by simply speeding up the rate at which they get migrants out of custody, out of border facilities, as if simply reducing the head count was the goal. Of course, that is no solution at all if the individuals are simply being released into the interior of our country.

Ordinarily, legal immigration is part of the heart of the United States of America, and it always has been, but it simply is not a universal human right for everybody in the Western Hemisphere who would like a better job or to break our rules and turn up at the border. No country, none—no country in the world—could govern itself that way.

In fact, this ongoing crisis is supremely unfair and uncompassionate to the men, women, and children whom it continues to entice into the scorching desert Sun. Border Patrol agents are having to double as humanitarian workers and EMTs. They rescue people who get lost, who are at risk of drowning, who have been simply abandoned by smugglers or traffickers.

Amidst all this, in the thick of this crisis, the Biden administration has spent weeks flirting with ending its title 42 authority, declaring the COVID emergency to be finished and over at our southern border and letting even more people stream across. COVID is already on the rise again, the border is already in crisis, and the President and his team want to end the emergency safeguards at our border? Reimpose COVID precautions on the American people but end the COVID emergency for illegal immigrants? How does that make any sense?

Meanwhile, our Democratic friends here on Capitol Hill say they want to push a massive amnesty plan into the reckless taxing-and-spending spree they want to pass later this year on a party-line vote. As if damaging inflation, soaring costs, lower real wages, and more debt were not punishment enough for the American people, Democrats also want to stuff a massive amnesty plan into their tax-and-spend spree. It is like they have systematically identified the worst idea for American families on every single issue and set about rolling them into one huge, reckless proposal.

RUSSIA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, now on a completely different matter,

last year, on a broad and a bipartisan basis, Congress passed sanctions that were designed to block Russia from completing its Nord Stream 2 pipeline project. The Biden administration recently waived those sanctions to allow the pipeline to move forward. Now it appears the administration has cut a deal with Germany that will allow the pipeline to become operational.

The initial press reporting about this deal does not inspire confidence that this administration is taking the Russian threat as seriously as it should, nor does it indicate that we are standing with our Ukrainian partners, who are struggling to defend themselves against Moscow's aggression. The administration appears to have ignored the broader implications of the Nord Stream 2 project and Russia's approach to Europe writ large.

Green energy initiatives or promises of diplomatic meetings will not address the real risks Moscow poses—not even close. Just a couple of years ago, Washington Democrats were absolutely melting down over their belief that the prior administration was being too soft on Russia and leaving Ukraine in the lurch. Where is the outrage today?

For several years there, my colleagues across the aisle sounded like big-time Russia hawks, so I hope they will now join Republicans in pressing the administration to explain this curious decision, to explain how President Biden intends to impose meaningful costs on Moscow for all its misdeeds at the same time they have America greasing the skids—greasing the skids—for this Putin pipeline.

IRAQ

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, now on one final matter, next week, President Biden is set to meet with Prime Minister of Iraq Mustafa al-Kadhimi. The meeting comes at an important moment for our shared efforts toward peace and security in Iraq and the entire region.

ISIS has been significantly weakened in Iraq and Syria after years of shared efforts, but the terrorist organization remains a grave threat. And ISIS is far from the only threat Iraqis and the Iraqi Government are facing. For years, Iran has systematically sought to undermine Iraq's sovereignty. Iran's well-armed proxy of militias report to Tehran, not Baghdad, but they operate inside Iraq.

These groups have conducted campaigns of intimidation and assassination against peaceful protesters and independent journalists in Iraq, the same brutal methods they employ in Syria, Lebanon, and in Iran itself. These Iranian-backed militias are also threatening our own American interests in Iraq. Iran wants to pick fights with a superpower while making the nation of Iraq bear the risk.

The fact is, the United States is in Iraq at the invitation of their government. We are there to support the